Decentralization is one of the most important reforms the Indonesian government has undertaken since the democratic elections of June 1999. Under Laws 22 and 25, which provide the framework for political and financial devolution, the districts and cities are assuming new responsibilities that were previously covered by the national government, as well as managing new financial resources that have been transferred from the central government or raised within their own localities.

In response to the challenges of decentralization reform, the Foundation initiated the **Indonesia Rapid Decentralization Appraisals (IRDA)**. This new program seeks to provide policymakers with the systematic and qualitative information they need to move decentralization forward. The appraisals serve as a means to quickly and accurately assess the impact of decentralization and associated policies in provinces (propinsis), municipalities or urban districts (kota) and regencies or rural district (kabupaten). More importantly, they serve to inform decision-makers in the central government about the conditions in the regions and provide local governments a channel for informing and influencing national-level policy dialogue.

**Highlights of Foundation Programs:**

The Indonesia Rapid Decentralization Appraisal is a three-year program that will identify broad trends and critical bottlenecks in a comprehensive manner and this information will be shared with policy makers, organizations and agencies tasked with managing the decentralization process.

The appraisals are meant to provide a snapshot of the state of decentralization from the local perspective and to bring this to national attention. The topics for the 1st IRDA include devolution of personnel and assets, inter-governmental relations, local government capability and service delivery, reorganization, government transparency, and revenue generation. More often than not, debate and decisions on local government policies are based largely on anecdotes. By producing an assessment for central government policymakers that is rigorous, timely and objective, the Foundation increases the likelihood that policy decisions and revisions to Laws
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22 and 25 are based on sound evidence. The appraisal findings will also be disseminated to government agencies and civil society organizations at the local level to stimulate a parallel dialogue about the progress and objectives of decentralization.

LEARNING FROM THE PHILIPPINES

IRDA is patterned after the rapid field appraisals conducted in the Philippines since the implementation of that country’s decentralization law in 1992. Informed by this experience in monitoring and evaluating decentralization, the Indonesia appraisals feature a more participatory research process than what was tried in the Philippines. It increases ownership of the monitoring process by Indonesian policymakers, government agencies, and civil society and research organizations (or “stakeholders”), by securing their inputs from the outset of the process. Stakeholders are involved in framing the research questions, analyzing the data, and drawing out lessons and best practices.

FOSTERING PUBLIC-PRIVATE DIALOGUE ON DECENTRALIZATION

IRDA’s approach emphasizes participation and dialogue. As information about decentralization is gathered by the Foundation and its local research partners, the participatory approach brings together people from government, NGOs and community-based organizations, the private sector, and academia into a series of facilitated roundtable meetings to discuss the research findings. This direct, face-to-face interaction between policymakers and citizens helps breakdown barriers and ensure that “local perspectives” are heard, often for the first time.

TRANSFERRING THE IRDA TECHNOLOGY TO INDONESIANS

The Foundation has selected local research institutions that have the expertise, experience, and credibility in the regions and municipalities selected as research sites. (See box.) The Foundation will work with these same institutions throughout the three-year program. The number of sites will increase from 13 in the first appraisal to 90 in the fifth. New sites will mainly be ones adjacent to the current sites and ones familiar to the research partners. While researchers are primarily involved in generating the data needed for policy adjustments relevant to decentralization, the investigation and monitoring skills they acquire through the IRDA will allow them to conduct research on more than just decentralization issues. More importantly, transferring the technology to these partner institutions ensures the sustainability of this unique effort beyond the life of the program.

Sites and Partners:

In the first IRDA, there are twelve partners for the thirteen sites, with one partner covering two sites:

1. Deli Serdang District, North Sumatera Province - Universitas Sumatra Utara
2. Bandung District and 3. Indramayu District, West Java Province - Indonesian Partnership for Governance Initiatives
4. Salatiga, Central Java Province - Universitas Kristen Satya Wacana
5. Semarang, Central Java Province - Yayasan Persemaian Cinta Kamanusiaan
6. Bantul District, Jogjakarta Special Region - Center for Population and Policy Studies, Universitas Gaja Mada
7. Sidoarjo District, East Java Province - Perkumpulan Untuk Peningkatan Usaha Kecil
8. Gianyar District, Bali Province - Universitas Udayana
9. Lombok Barat District (West Nusa Tenggara Province - Yayasan KOSLATA
10. Pontianak, West Kalimantan Province - Yayasan MADANIKA
11. Minahasa District, North Sulawesi Province - Universitas Sam Ratulangi
12. Jayapura, Papua Province - Universitas Cendrawasih
13. Jakarta Capital Region - Center for Economic and Social Studies

* Many Asia Foundation programs in Indonesia have been conducted with generous support from the U.S. Agency for International Development and other international donors.